

26 March 2009

To the Believers in the Cradle of the Faith

Dearly loved Friends,

It has come to our attention that some members of the Bahá'í community have apparently been approached by officials to sign a document stating that they will not undertake any individual or collective Bahá'í activity, even if requested to do so. Should this report be confirmed, it could well indicate the intention of certain authorities, in the wake of the cessation of the functioning of the Yárán and the Khádimín, to apply pressure to prevent you from engaging in the practices of Bahá'í life and the expression of your beliefs. With utter disregard for the teachings of all religions and the standards of human rights, they would seek in this way to deprive a group of their country's own citizens of freedom of thought and conscience.

Acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings implies a commitment on the part of the individual to strive for one's own spiritual development, to participate in the construction of a vibrant community, and to contribute to the common good. The collective undertakings of the Bahá'í community include the management of affairs related to personal status; the conduct of the Nineteen Day Feast and other Bahá'í gatherings; the education of children, youth and adults in spiritual and social matters, as well as in the arts and sciences; and the creation of an environment among its members that encourages mutual support in the pursuit of such activities and in service to the wider society. Freedom to acquire knowledge of the arts and sciences and to act on one's beliefs within the parameters of obedience to civil law, the dictates of wisdom, and respect for prevailing social conditions is the prerogative of every human being. Any action that restricts this liberty represents a transgression not only of fundamental human rights and all international conventions that define and uphold these rights but also of Islamic standards of justice. In the light of such principles, to require individuals to sign a statement indicating that they will refrain from practices essential to their Faith constitutes a clear violation of freedom of conscience.

Your steadfastness evokes our highest esteem, and our prayers in the Holy Shrines ever surround you.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]